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THE CRY OF THE WOMEN.

IN the name of common-sense—demands the bewildered reader of the flood of recent books written by the gentler sex—what is the matter with the women? Their voices are all bitter with unsatisfied longing, yet one can distinguish no definite demand. What do they seek? What provokes such outcries as *The Heavenly Twins*, *Keynotes*, *A Superfluous Woman*, *A Yellow Aster*, *The Woman Who Dares*, and their like? They are all stormy with revolt against—what? Why can they not say plainly what it is that troubles them and what it is they wish?

A literature has its birth in the current needs and thoughts of a people, and that this recent outpouring of feminine hearts, and these confused voices of discontent, express the mental condition of the woman of to-day, is proved by the greediness with which edition after edition of such books is seized upon by the feminine reading public, and the echoes they awake in the talk of the drawing-room and boudoir.

Yet the sum of all these volumes is like the cry of an infant, intimating a pain without explaining the cause.

Free speech and free thought are new to woman. Her mind, long cramped in the swaddling-bands of repression and convention, moves with staggering uncertainty towards its aim, and she cannot define, even to herself, much less state clearly to the world, the true meaning of the pain she feels. She only knows that she is in revolt against what has been; she cannot yet say what is to replace it. Some cry out for political rights, others are convinced that the abolition of stays and introduction of trousers are all that is needed to bring down a female millennium upon our heads.

“Latch keys!” cry the brow-beaten English young persons, “and freedom to be out after dark like our brothers. Look at them; they are quite happy; it is the possession of latch-key freedom makes them so. Give it also to us!” “No,” roundly declares Mona Caird; “what we need is a latch key to let us out of the life-long bond of marriage. It weighs so heavily upon us. Let us go free.”

“Nonsense!”, contradicts Sarah Grand. “Marriage is all right. What is wrong is man. He comes to marriage with stained, empty hands, while he demands that ours be spotless and heaped with health, innocence, and faith. He swindles us. Reform man if you would make us happy.”

“Higher education!” “Equal wages!” “Physical development!” “Expansion of the Ego!” cry the conflicting voices, all missing the true meaning of the trouble and the true remedy.

Morgan, in his “Ancient Society,” dealing with the question of Mutter-Recht (mother-right), declares that throughout the earliest period of human existence of which any knowledge is obtainable, de cent and all rights of succession were traced through the women of the *gens*, into which primitive man was organized. Women, as being the bearers and protectors of the young, were regarded as the natural landowners, and therefore did not follow the fathers of their children lest they should lose their possessions and rights of inheritance. The men instead married into the sept of their wives. The power and independence of women were lost through the practice of making female captives in war. These had no land, and were the property of and dependent upon the will of their male captor. The men naturally grew to prefer these subject wives. The Arab advised his son, “It is better to have a wife with no claims of kin, and no brethren near to

take her part." Women therefore began to dread capture as the worst of evils. When at last the vast hordes began to move in the racial migrations, with their wars of spoliation and conquest, there was no security save in strength, and the females yielded all power and possessions to the men in return for protection.

Man, thus invested with political superiority, claimed no moral lordship over his mate. Under the pagan rule Roman jurisconsults by their theory of "Natural Law" evidently assumed the equality of the sexes as a principle of equity. Sir Henry Sumner Maine says there came a time "when the situation of the female was one of great personal and proprietary independence; for the tendency of the law was to reduce the power of the guardian to a nullity, while the form of marriage conferred on the husband no compensating superiority." Among the Northern tribes also the woman was held in all moral aspects the equal of man. Alike the blue-eyed wife of the Barbarian and the proud Roman matron were, as the bearers and breeders of the race, the equals of the fighters and rulers of the race. The importance of their functions was fully recognized and respected, and the priestess at the sylvan altar, the vestals serving the fires and the temples at Rome were held worthy to speak face to face with the gods and convey their blessings to man.

It was the humble religion of Judæa, embraced with ardor by willing women martyrs, which robbed them of their last remnant of equality and cursed them with a bitter curse. The very fountain and purpose of woman's being fell under the ban. Her presence in holy places became a desecration, and for the first time her feminine functions were regarded as a shame rather than a glory.

The founder of the faith—superior to all limitations of time or race—had set an example in his own life of reverence and tenderness for the sex, and gave no warrant by word or deed for the insult offered to women by his church, but the Asian, Paul, before that church was organized, was dictating silence to women, covered heads, and submission, and declaring against marriage as a weakness. If a man must marry because of his weakness, why, let him; but not to marry was better. The church accepted his views.

Lecky, comparing the Roman jurisprudence with the Canon law, remarks that "the Pagan laws were constantly repealing the disabilities of women, whereas it was the aim of the Canon law to substitute enactments imposing upon the female the most offensive personal restrictions and stringent subordination."

Marriage, the very meaning and purpose of woman's existence, was degraded. No priest of God might approach a woman. Her very touch was an indelible stain and abomination to the church's chosen, and she herself was encouraged to deny all her wholesome impulses, and endeavor to stifle her natural instincts with the spiritual ecstacies of morbid meditation. Woman, at last, was poor indeed! The Oriental ideal, with its fierce sexual egoism, had triumphed over the ideal of the Occident, and so deeply did the Asian thought stamp itself upon the Western mind that historians do not hesitate to attribute to this scorn of woman and her high mission of childbearing, a long delay in the development of European civilization. The higher, more spiritual natures, being more under the influence of the church, bowed to its suggestions of asceticism and left the baser sort to perpetuate the race, and thus delayed the processes of evolution.

The reformation, the first uprising of the Western mind against Asian domination, threw off the yoke of celibacy, but the ingrained contempt of woman was not so easily eradicated. Honor in man became integrity, *wholeness*; but for her it still signified only chastity, and her real work in life was not restored to its ancient dignity and importance. Centuries of such teaching have wrought their wretched work, despite the mighty forces of nature. Virginity instead of purity has become the ideal of the highest type of woman, who shrieks from the fulfillment of her functions as a stepping down, instead of glorying in it as the achievement of her sacred purpose; child-bearing is accepted more as a dull necessity and duty than as the great work of a life, for which all youth should be a time of training and preparation, as man is prepared for his duties—different, but no more important.

Since the beginning of the Christian era woman has learned to accept man and his mental and physical achievements as the standard of excellence, and to humbly admit that she permanently failed of this standard; but with the universality of the democratic idea she has grown restless under a sense of inferiority in value and dignity in the general scheme of things, wherefore this desperate search for some fountain of Salmacis which shall transmute her to the exact likeness of her long time lord and superior.

Let this two thousand-year-old wrong be undone. Let women run the race, paint, write, teach, speak, as her talents dictate, but let her use these things as being only the pastimes, not the work, of her life. Let the young girl learn the tremendous meaning and sacredness of her functions and their exercise, and make her understand once for all that her real work lies in carrying the torch of life from generation to generation; that she is the high priestess of life, and her body its holy temple; that the noblest possibilities of the race and its upward growth lie in her hands, dependent upon her wholesome vigor and purity, and her wise choice of a mate. Let married love and motherhood be made noble and important in her—the one thing to be done supremely well.

For heaven's sake let the woman cease to set the mental and material achievements of man before her as the standard to which she must perforce raise herself at the sacrifice of her own great talent. Let her get it clearly into her head that equality does not necessarily imply similarity. Let her say with due pride in her work when she contemplates the miracles wrought by the hands of her sons:

"Did man make this? Well, I made those who made this!"

This hoary wrong and error being abolished, and women once more aware of the beauty and importance of their work, such outbursts of restless passion and discontent as have of late defaced their writings will be changed from a cry into a song.

ELIZABETH BISLAND.

A TALE OF TWO CAPITALS.

A FRIEND of mine, recently deceased, told me, if my memory serves me correctly, that he had the following facts from Baron Haussmann himself:

Ordered by Napoleon III. to submit plans for the renovation of Paris, the Baron was for some time at a loss how to meet the twofold requirements of the contemplated improvements, for the new streets had to be at once beautiful and so laid out as to be readily commanded by artillery.